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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001889

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [SA](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: TO SHIA, "RECONCILIATION" MEANS BA'THIST REVIVAL

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\* Missing Section 001 \*  
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16. (C) Even the Sunni Deputy Prime Minister, Rafi al-Issawi, told us on July 7 that "reconciliation" needs to be properly defined because many interpret it as bringing back the Ba'ath. Shatha al-Obosi, MP from the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party, told Poloff last month many IIP members try to avoid talk of "reconciliation" because they are afraid of being labeled Ba'athists. Other Sunnis like Salah al-Mutlaq, Hewan MP, view current de-Ba'athification policy as unfairly targeting former Ba'ath members who joined because it was a requirement for employment. Mutlaq often brings up the issue with Poloffs and said he is in contact with Ahmed Chalabi, the chairman of the De-Ba'athification Commission.

17. (C) There is progress on pensions to former army officers, many of whom are Sunni. Sunni independent MP Wathab al-Shakir told Poloff this month he is pushing legislation to grant pensions to retired Saddam-era army officers. Badr leader and chairman of the Security and Defense Committee Hadi al-Amiri separately stressed to Poloffs the importance of keeping these army officers content and said he has worked with the Finance Ministry to allocate funds for these pensions. Amiri, however, said he expects resistance to this bill from the Presidency Council.

Comment

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18. (C) Our Shia contacts were reassured when Poloffs explained that the U.S. has no desire to bring back the Ba'ath Party but instead views reconciliation as improving Arab-Kurd relations, preventing a return to Sunni-Shia sectarian violence (which was partly caused by Ba'athist themselves), and keeping Shia militia off the streets. The hardline Anzi, for instance, nodded enthusiastically to this American definition of reconciliation and asked the U.S. to consistently explain this to the Iraqi people. Given the negative connotations associated with "reconciliation" at present, we recommended substitute terms like "accommodation" or "national plan/project;" the latter was used by Maliki on July 6 as he spoke to officials in Anbar, the Sunni heartland.

19. (C) Comment continued. As Shia politicians consider electoral coalitions that include Sunni parties, they will likely seek to balance this outreach by brandishing their anti-Ba'ath credentials. Therefore, Shia leaders this year probably will avoid major legislation on some issues dividing Sunni and Shia politicians, like de-Ba'athification reform and

national amnesty for prisoners alleged to be associated with the former regime. The pension bill for retired Saddam-era army officers might be an exception. Sunni MP Salih al-Mutlaq told Poloff on July 9 that progress on these issues is essential to any true cross-sectarian accommodation. End comment.

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